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Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2267 (2016), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until 28 February 2017 and requested me to report every six months on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and on progress made in the implementation of the resolution and the mandate of UNIOGBIS. The report also provides an update on key political, security, human rights, socioeconomic and humanitarian developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 2 August 2016 (S/2016/675).

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The political situation in Guinea-Bissau continued to be dominated by the protracted political impasse in the country and by regional and international efforts to find a sustainable solution. A high-level delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, in his capacity as ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau, visited Bissau on 10 September. He was accompanied by the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and Sierra Leone, Marjon Vashti Kamara and Samura M.W. Kamara, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Marcel de Souza. The delegation held consultations with national political stakeholders, including the President, José Mário Vaz, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, the Prime Minister, Baciro Dja, representatives of the five parties with parliamentary seats and the group of 15 parliamentarians who had been expelled from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC).

3. My Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Head of UNIOGBIS, Modibo Ibrahim Touré, and the Special Representative and Head of the African Union Liaison Office in Guinea-Bissau, Ovídio Pequeno, participated in the

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ECOWAS-led consultations as observers on behalf of the Guinea-Bissau-based group of international partners composed of the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations.

4. The ECOWAS consultations resulted in the signing, on 10 September, of a six-point road map to end the political crisis. The signatories included the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the leaders of the two main parties represented in the National Assembly, PAIGC and the Party for Social Renewal (PRS). The six points outlined in the road map are the holding of an inclusive national round-table dialogue; the formation of an inclusive Government to implement key reforms before legislative elections in 2018; the establishment of an ECOWAS monitoring and follow-up mechanism; the implementation of reforms in the defence and security sectors; and the "progressive demobilization" of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) within six months of the formation of a national contingent to take over its mandate of protecting State institutions.

5. In a resolution adopted by its Central Committee on 16 September, PAIGC clarified that it accepted the notion of an inclusive Government, provided that its "right to govern", stemming from its victory in the legislative elections of 2014, was acknowledged. On the same day, the National Political Commission of PRS also announced its agreement to continue negotiations towards an inclusive political dialogue under the auspices of ECOWAS and in line with the road map.

6. From 10 to 14 October, the ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau convened consultations with national stakeholders in Conakry, focused specifically on the implementation of the first two elements of the road map: the holding of an inclusive national round-table dialogue and the formation of an inclusive Government. Representatives of the Government, State institutions, political parties represented in the National Assembly, the 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC and civil society participated. The President of the ECOWAS Commission, my Special Representative and envoys from Angola, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the African Union also attended. On 14 October, the political stakeholders signed the Conakry Agreement, which provides for the appointment of a consensus Prime Minister who would have "the confidence" of the President; the formation of an inclusive Government to implement a programme of reforms stemming from a national round-table dialogue, to be held within 30 days of the appointment of the Prime Minister; the development and adoption of a stability pact; and the unconditional reintegration of the 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC into the party, in accordance with the party's rules.

7. Following their return to Guinea-Bissau, differences emerged among political stakeholders as to the agreement reached in Conakry with regard to the appointment of the Prime Minister. On the one hand, PAIGC, the Democratic Convergence Party (PCD) and the Union for Change (UM) claimed that agreement had been reached on a name from the list of three candidates proposed by the President to the ECOWAS Mediator before the consultations. On the other hand, PRS and the New Democracy Party argued that, while the three names had been considered in Conakry, no definitive agreement had been reached. From 24 to 27 October, the President embarked on a fresh round of consultations with representatives of political parties, civil society and religious organizations to obtain their views on who should be the

new Prime Minister. In parallel, he also briefed representatives of the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations on the outcome of the consultations.

8. On 5 November, the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, visited Guinea-Bissau to consult the President, the Speaker and the Prime Minister, representatives of PAIGC and PRS and the 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC. All stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to the Conakry Agreement. In a final communiqué issued following her visit, co-signed by the Presidents of Liberia and Guinea-Bissau and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, it was agreed that the reintegration of the expelled parliamentarians into PAIGC should be accelerated and that the President of Guinea-Bissau should appoint, without further delay, a consensual Prime Minister who would "have his confidence".

9. On 15 November, following further consultations with all political parties represented in the National Assembly, the President dismissed the Government on the basis that it had been unable to obtain the approval of the Assembly for its programme of work and the national budget. On 18 November, he appointed Umaro Sissoco Embaló, one of the three names that he had proposed to the ECOWAS Mediator before the talks in Conakry, as Prime Minister. In the appointment decree, he referred to the Conakry Agreement and noted that the nomination had followed all constitutional formalities. The reactions of national stakeholders to the appointment were in accordance with the positions that they had taken following the signing of the Agreement. On 18 and 19 November, respectively, PAIGC contended that the President had repudiated the Agreement through the appointment, while UM denounced the appointment as a violation of the Agreement. On 19 November, PRS announced that it agreed with the appointment and would consider participating in the future Government if invited to do so.

10. Upon assuming office, the Prime Minister initiated consultations with all signatories to the Conakry Agreement with a view to forming an inclusive Government. In addition to national stakeholders, he held meetings with the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, in Dakar on 19 November, the President of Liberia in Monrovia on 28 November and international partner organizations in Bissau on 29 November. On 26 November, PAIGC reiterated its determination not to allow its members to participate in the new Government and announced the withdrawal of its confidence in the President. In a statement issued on 27 November, the 15 expelled parliamentarians condemned the stance of PAIGC, expressed full confidence in the new Prime Minister and urged him to expedite the formation of an inclusive Government. On 12 December, the President appointed by decree the members of the Government. Of the five parties represented in the National Assembly, PRS alone joined the new Government, which was inaugurated on the following day.

11. On 17 December, in a final communiqué issued following its fiftieth ordinary session, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government reaffirmed its deep concern over the protracted political and institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau and that the Conakry Agreement remained the only framework for its peaceful resolution. The Authority urged the President, who attended the meeting, to comply

with the provisions of the Agreement and called upon all parties to strictly respect and comply with the tenets of the Agreement. The Authority also directed the ECOWAS Commission to withdraw ECOMIB by the end of its current mandate on 30 June 2017, beginning in the first quarter of 2017. It made no reference to the preconditions on which the withdrawal would be contingent as outlined in the ECOWAS road map of 10 September.

12. On 28 December, the leader of the United People's Assembly-Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau, Nuno Nabiam, publicly alleged that the President was planning to change the Bureau of the National Assembly and depose the current Speaker in order to "force" the Assembly to adopt the new Government's programme of work. On 30 December, the Permanent Commission of the National Assembly met, at the request of PAIGC and without the participation of PRS representatives, to discuss, among other things, the allegations. Following the meeting, the Commission urged the President to revoke the decrees appointing the Prime Minister and his Government and to appoint Augusto Olivais as the new consensus Prime Minister on the basis of his selection from the list of three candidates provided to the political parties in Conakry. They also called for the appointment of an inclusive and consensual Government, stating that those steps would facilitate the implementation of the remaining provisions of the Conakry Agreement, especially the holding of a round-table dialogue for the development of the Government's programme of work.

13. In a televised address to the nation on 31 December, the President acknowledged that 2016 had been a difficult year for Guinea-Bissau and called upon all citizens to unite around building the nation and reforming the Administration. He also expressed the need for the country to focus efforts on tackling youth unemployment, halting corruption and increasing rice production.

B. Security situation

14. The overall security situation remained calm, the tense political climate notwithstanding, with no major incidents reported. On 16 November, Armed Forces Day, the Chief of General Staff, General Biaguê Na N'Tan, reaffirmed the subordination of the military to the political authorities and the Constitution, noting that there would be zero tolerance of any political interference by military personnel.

C. Human rights situation

15. No gross human rights violations were reported, but limited capacities and financial constraints continued to impede the ability of the State authorities to discharge their functions in the area of human rights effectively.

16. On 14 November, following a protest march organized by civil society organizations, the Minister of Territorial Administration issued an order to prohibit, for an unspecified period, public demonstrations and rallies throughout the country, with the exception of those authorized by him.

17. The reopening of the sector court in Canchungo, Cacheu region, notwithstanding, access to justice nationwide remained poor, in particular for vulnerable groups and women. Corrections facilities also continued to suffer from overcrowding, insecurity and poor living conditions. On 16 October, as a result of overcrowding and inadequate perimeter security, 24 detainees escaped from the Judiciary Police detention centre in Bissau. Fourteen remain at large.

18. Limited progress was made in tackling serious human rights violations from the past through the existing formal justice system. The establishment of an international commission of inquiry, as recommended at the National Conference on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights held in July 2013, remains pending. Owing to the political situation, no progress was made in establishing transitional justice mechanisms or in convening the proposed national conference on reconciliation.

D. Social, economic and humanitarian situation

19. On 2 December, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to resume the disbursement of $7 million in budgetary support to Guinea-Bissau given the progress made by the Government in reversing the contentious bank bailout of 2015 and taking measures to improve fiscal performance.

20. The political and institutional instability notwithstanding, Guinea-Bissau registered strong economic growth thanks to a record harvest and the sale of cashew nuts. In 2016, agricultural production grew by an estimated 8.3 per cent, with more than 190,000 tons of raw cashew being exported. Consequently, gross domestic product growth in 2016 was expected to surpass the 4.8 per cent forecast by IMF in 2015. Nevertheless, 30.6 per cent of the rural population remains food insecure, according to a survey carried out in September by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with the support of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The figure represents an increase of 10.5 per cent compared with 2015.

21. There were several public sector strikes over salary arrears, primarily by employees of the ministries responsible for education, economic affairs and finance. Teaching unions also went on strike from 26 September to 21 November, affecting primary and secondary schools and hampering the distribution of 1.17 million textbooks by the United Nations Children's Fund. The Government has since made payments towards the arrears. Overall access to basic social services remained limited, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities.

III. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

A. Inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation process

22. UNIOGBIS continued to encourage national stakeholders to seek solutions to the political crisis through dialogue. In this regard, my Special Representative regularly engaged with national stakeholders, including the President, the Speaker,

the Prime Minister, the President of the Supreme Court, the Chief of General Staff and political leaders. He also engaged with representatives of political parties, the 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC, civil society, including youth and women's organizations, and traditional and religious leaders.

23. In support of the ECOWAS mediation efforts, my Special Representative visited the subregion, including Abidjan, Abuja, Conakry, Dakar, Freetown and Monrovia, and worked closely with the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

24. In coordination with the international partners of Guinea-Bissau, my Special Representative continued to provide leadership in forging a common understanding of the situation in the country and options for a political resolution of the crisis. In that regard, on 28 October, he convened a meeting of the international partner organizations represented in Bissau, including the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, and representatives of the six parties that constitute the Forum of Democratic Parties for Political Consultation, including PAIGC, PCD and UM.

25. UNIOGBIS also continued to support the organizing commission for the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau, in particular with technical expertise and financial support through the Peacebuilding Fund. The commission is preparing its report outlining recommendations on how the national conference could move forward in establishing permanent or semi-permanent conflict resolution and dialogue mechanisms to help to address the root causes of instability. From 11 to 20 August and from 18 to 24 September, members of the commission undertook study trips to Timor-Leste and Côte d'Ivoire, respectively, to learn from national dialogue and reconciliation processes in other contexts, with the technical and financial support of UNIOGBIS through the Fund. Between 9 September and 9 October, the commission organized a series of meetings in Bissau with focus groups, including young people, women, the military and security forces, the media and the judiciary, with the technical assistance of UNIOGBIS and the financial support of the Fund.

B. National security sector reform and rule of law strategies

26. UNIOGBIS, in cooperation with the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union, assisted national stakeholders in reviewing the country's strategy for security sector reform, originally published in 2006.

27. As part of efforts to strengthen the justice sector, UNIOGBIS supported the Ministry of Justice in organizing the sixth high-level National Justice Forum, held from 6 to 8 December in Bissau. Some 70 representatives, including 10 women, of judicial institutions, law enforcement agencies and civil society developed recommendations concerning military justice, penitentiary reform and countering violent extremism and organized crime.

28. From 8 to 15 November, UNIOGBIS supported the organization of five seminars to strengthen the capacity and enhance the coordination of 189 members of the Quinara regional and sectoral consultative council, which was established in 2015 with the support of UNIOGBIS. Representatives of civil society, including 30 women, working in the fields of peacebuilding, rule of law, crime prevention,

environmental crimes and security governance also participated. The national authorities are considering the replication of the council in other regions.

29. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to provide technical and financial support to the National Centre for Judicial Training. The Centre provided refresher training for magistrates, lawyers and police officers, including on environmental law, cross-border crime and trafficking in persons and drugs. Between 30 November and 8 December, with the financial support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the United States of America and the technical support of the Centre, six judges and six prosecutors serving in criminal courts in border areas participated in joint training sessions in Brazil and Senegal with magistrates of countries facing similar challenges.

30. With the support of UNIOGBIS, the National Defence Institute organized a conference on maritime security, held from 23 to 25 November in Bissau and attended by participants from the navy, the air force and national maritime stakeholders. From 17 to 21 December, UNIOGBIS facilitated an inter-agency maritime assessment mission for the development of a national maritime strategy. On 15 December, also with the support of UNIOGBIS, the Institute held a conference on key issues and challenges in countering violent extremism and terrorism for 40 participants, including 6 women.

31. UNDP continued to support the Ministry of Justice in the provision of free legal assistance and mediation of minor conflicts through the centres for access to justice in the Bafatá, Bissau, Cacheu and Oio regions. The centres' legal staff continued to visit prisons and to assist the police in reviewing cases, including those of illegally detained prisoners, which led to several people being released. An additional centre was launched in the Quinara region on 5 December.

C. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

32. In its efforts to support national stakeholders in overcoming the political stalemate in Guinea-Bissau, UNIOGBIS held regular consultations with the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS and the European Union, as well as with members of the Security Council and bilateral partners represented in Bissau.

33. In close collaboration with international partners, the United Nations system provided technical and logistical support to the ECOWAS-led mediation efforts in September and October. With the support of the Peacebuilding Fund and with extrabudgetary funds from the Department of Political Affairs, UNIOGBIS provided technical, logistical and financial support to delegations dispatched by ECOWAS to Guinea-Bissau from 5 to 8 September, on 10 September and on 5 November, as well as for the organization of the round-table consultations facilitated by the ECOWAS Mediator in Conakry from 10 to 14 October. My Special Representative participated as an observer in those consultations.

34. In addition, the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau worked closely with key partners, including the African Development Bank, the European Union, the West

African Economic and Monetary Union and the World Bank, to ensure more coherent support for continuity of services and to tackle development challenges.

D. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs

35. The United Nations supported initiatives aimed at fostering open dialogue and promoting understanding of the state of democracy in Guinea-Bissau. In September and October, three conferences were organized by the National Institute of Studies and Research, with the support of UNIOGBIS, focusing on models of national political systems, national reconciliation processes in post-conflict contexts and the reform of political parties. Some 255 people, including 40 women, attended the conferences. On 23 September, UNIOGBIS assisted the National Assembly in the organization of a conference on the role of young people in building democracy.

36. On 10 November, UNIOGBIS launched an outreach campaign to promote the participation of citizens in democratic processes and in building a culture of democracy. As part of the campaign, four conferences, on political accountability, a stability pact, human rights and gender equality, were held at universities in Bissau between 10 November and 15 December and were broadcast on national television and radio. The conferences brought together 544 students, including 271 women. Public outreach meetings on constitutional rights were also held in all regions, except Bolama, between 5 and 21 December, by partner civil society organizations, with the support of UNIOGBIS regional offices.

37. UNIOGBIS continued to support initiatives that promoted the participation of women and young people in political dialogue. On 10 and 11 November and 29 and 30 December, UNIOGBIS supported the holding of regional meetings in Catió, Tombali region, and Bissau, with 67 representatives, including 38 women, of civil society organizations and authorities from the Quinara and Tombali regions, and the Biombo region and Bissau, respectively. Participants discussed dialogue between parliamentarians and communities, democratic culture among citizens and preparations for the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development.

38. UNDP continued to provide support to specialized commissions of the National Assembly. From 3 to 6 November, it supported a visit by the Commission on Economic Affairs to State revenue collection institutions in the Quinara region to assess challenges in implementing their mandates. Between 16 and 23 November, it assisted the Commission for Women and Children to hold two workshops and a seminar in the Cacheu and Oio regions to disseminate the law against domestic violence. In partnership with the women's parliamentary caucus, the Commission for Women and Children held six debates in Bissau, on 23 and 24 November, with 80 women from civil society organizations to discuss the role of women in economic, social, political and cultural development.

39. From 22 to 26 November, as part of efforts to strengthen the capacity of public financial management oversight, the Court of Audit, supported by UNDP, organized a seminar for 53 finance and administration officials on accounting procedures and standards. The website of the Court, an important outreach tool to improve

accountability and transparency in public finance management, was launched during the seminar.

E. Law enforcement, criminal justice and penitentiary systems

40. UNIOGBIS continued to provide strategic and technical support to national law enforcement agencies to enhance their capacity. It developed a basic training programme for the country's police institutions and supported the creation of a career development centre to mitigate the effects of the absence of a police academy in Guinea-Bissau since 1992. UNIOGBIS also provided technical support to law enforcement agencies to develop internal security strategies and workplans.

41. To enhance coordination between police and internal security agencies, UNIOGBIS supported law enforcement agencies in replicating a national-level mechanism for strategic coordination, the Higher Council for Policing and Internal Security Coordination, at the regional level. On 23 October, the first regional-level mechanism held its inaugural meeting in Bafatá.

42. From 19 to 23 September, UNIOGBIS held a training workshop in Buba, Quinara region, for 16 officers from the Public Order Police and the National Guard to improve report-writing, coordination mechanisms and data and case management between police officers, prosecutors and courts.

43. From 30 October to 2 November, in collaboration with the Judiciary Police, UNIOGBIS held a training workshop on skills for organized crime investigations in its regional office in Bafatá for 15 officers, including 1 woman, from the Public Order Police and the National Guard. From 7 to 14 November, UNIOGBIS held a training workshop in Bissau on interviewing and interrogation techniques in complex investigations. In attendance were 24 officers, including 5 women, from the Public Order Police, the National Guard, the Judiciary Police, the Security Information Service and the Office of the Prosecutor General. From 28 November to 9 December in Bissau, UNIOGBIS also hosted a training-of-trainers course on conduct and discipline for 10 law enforcement officers, including 3 women, from the Public Order Police, the National Guard, the Judiciary Police, the Security Information Service and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

44. Between 28 November and 2 December, UNIOGBIS provided technical support to a working group comprising 10 officers, including 5 women, from the Public Order Police, the National Guard, the Judiciary Police, INTERPOL and the Office of the Prosecutor General to develop standard operating procedures for the collection of evidence and the effective documentation of the chain of custody.

F. Promotion and protection of human rights

45. UNIOGBIS continued to monitor trials and preliminary hearings at the regional courts in Bafatá, Bissau, Buba and Gabú. While due process is generally being respected, access to counsel remains limited. UNIOGBIS also continued to monitor prisons, detention centres and police cells in Bissau and the regions and to draw the attention of the authorities to the poor living conditions of prisoners and

delays in investigations. It also continued to raise awareness of and provide technical advice on human rights.

46. UNIOGBIS further undertook advocacy, reporting, capacity-building, awareness-raising and outreach activities for State institutions and civil society organizations, including traditional leaders, women and youth organizations and academic institutions.

47. To enhance the capacity of non-governmental organizations in terms of planning, project design and fundraising, UNIOGBIS facilitated training sessions for human rights advocates in Bafatá from 20 to 23 September, Bissau from 27 to 30 December, Cacheu from 27 to 30 September and Quinara from 29 November to 2 December. To date, the training has benefited 105 representatives, including 33 women, from national non-governmental organizations nationwide.

48. During a workshop organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the support of UNIOGBIS, from 14 to 17 November, national stakeholders agreed on the terms of reference of an interministerial committee on human rights to follow up on State obligations resulting from the ratification of international and regional human rights instruments. The Minister of Justice agreed to submit to the Cabinet a revised statute of the National Human Rights Commission, which would make it compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

49. On 16 November, Armed Forces Day, the Minister of Defence launched a human rights guide for the military at a ceremony in Bissau attended by the Secretary of State for Former Combatants, members of the National Assembly and all branches of the armed forces, as well as by representatives of the international community and civil society. The guide was produced by UNIOGBIS based on issues and best practices identified during training sessions held since 2011.

50. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) assisted the Government in the organization of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, as part of the larger campaign, through a series of public events. The activities included an official ceremony held in Tombali, one of the most remote regions, to celebrate the abandonment of the practice of female genital mutilation and early marriage in 10 local communities.

51. To support the Ministry of Justice in promoting a better understanding of human rights, UNIOGBIS produced a guide for civil society organizations to support them in dealing with human rights violations and enhancing awareness and knowledge of international, regional and national human rights protection mechanisms. A practical human rights guide to disseminate national, regional and international legal standards for persons deprived of their liberty was also produced by UNIOGBIS for the Ministry.

52. As part of the celebration of Human Rights Day, UNIOGBIS supported the holding of two public debates, on 6 and 8 December, in Bafatá and in Buba, Quinara region, to enhance dialogue between the local authorities and the public. Discussions during the debate held in Bafatá, attended by 50 participants, focused on female genital mutilation, discrimination, domestic violence, child exploitation, rape and other sexual abuse, impunity and high fees requested by the courts and the

police. The debate in Buba, which brought together some 300 participants, including public servants, traditional leaders and the Governor of Quinara, focused on lack of access to justice, gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, school dropout rates, access to health care, environmental conservation and the management of biodiversity and protected areas.

G. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

53. National institutions, with the support of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), continued their efforts to detect and report on drug trafficking and to seize illicit drugs. Investigations and joint operations conducted by the Judiciary Police and the Transnational Crime Unit indicate that trafficking continues to affect Guinea-Bissau as a transit country. Between August and December, the Judiciary Police and the Transnational Crime Unit arrested five individuals carrying drugs at the international airport, seizing 8.5 kg of cocaine.

54. UNIOGBIS and UNODC continued to provide technical, logistical and financial support to the Airport Communication Project, funded by the European Union and the United States, which helps in the strengthening of air borders and the interception of illicit flows of people and goods. In Guinea-Bissau, it is also supporting the operationalization, through mentoring and training, of an anti-trafficking unit at the international airport.

55. UNIOGBIS and UNODC provided technical, logistical and financial support to a capacity-building project implemented by Brazilian prosecutors. The project, funded by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, is focused on training public prosecutors in Guinea-Bissau on the handling of cases involving trafficking in drugs and persons, corruption, money-laundering, terrorism and environmental protection. The initiative consists of four sessions, each lasting three weeks, for groups of up to 30 trainees each. The first two sessions, held between 22 August and 25 November, benefited 54 prosecutors, including 13 women. The two remaining sessions are scheduled for the first semester of 2017.

56. Joint regional and international operations continue to be critical in tackling drug trafficking and organized crime in Guinea-Bissau and the subregion. Partnering with the German-funded capacity-building project to foster stability in West Africa, UNODC and UNIOGBIS provided planning and financial support to Operation Adwenpa II, implemented at select land borders and airports in participating countries from 14 to 21 November. The joint operation, which involved INTERPOL, the Transnational Crime Unit, the Judiciary Police, the Directorate-General for Migration and Borders, the Security Information Service and the Fiscal Brigade, enabled participants to use skills acquired during training conducted by UNODC and INTERPOL on joint operations.

H. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

57. The United Nations continued to work with national stakeholders to enhance the overall participation of women in national affairs, conflict mediation and the strengthening of protection mechanisms. UN-Women, in collaboration with the

United Nations Population Fund, assisted the Ministry of Women, the Family and Social Cohesion and the Institute for Women and Children in reviewing the national gender policy and formulating an action plan for its implementation. UN-Women also supported the Ministry in the formulation of a national family policy to reduce gender-based inequalities in households.

58. From 27 to 29 September, UNIOGBIS organized a training-of-trainers workshop aimed at enhancing the capacity of 15 National Guard officers, including 6 women, to respond to sexual and gender-based violence. It also partnered with the United Nations Volunteers programme to facilitate training for 16 Volunteers and nine representatives of youth organizations aimed at enhancing gender mainstreaming skills and gender-focused programme management.

59. On 4 November, with the financial support of UN-Women, three government officials and three representatives of UN-Women undertook a study visit to Ziguinchor, Senegal, to learn from the experience of a neighbourhood association that implemented a community-based project to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence. This exercise envisages a future, partner-supported replication of a centre with similar functions in Guinea-Bissau.

60. On 5 December, the Government, with the support of UNIOGBIS, launched a women's mediation network as part of efforts to promote the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution. UNIOGBIS had previously supported the preparations for the launch through training and capacity-building for 145 mediators (121 women and 24 men) and through monitoring and assistance.

I. Work with the Peacebuilding Commission

61. The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission remained actively engaged in following the situation in Guinea-Bissau. On 19 September, it issued a communiqué in which it welcomed the ECOWAS-brokered six-point road map and reiterated its support for the efforts by ECOWAS to implement it.

62. In recognition of the need to address the gap in bottom-up peacebuilding initiatives, the Peacebuilding Fund facilitated the development of a project aimed at empowering women and young people to participate more effectively in political life. This, coupled with the overall implementation of the Peacebuilding Priority Plan for 2015-2017, was supported by the Fund secretariat based in Guinea-Bissau.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

63. Under the leadership of my Special Representative, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team have continued to work with the national authorities to make the Guinea-Bissau-United Nations Partnership Framework operational in line with national priorities. To ensure coherent system-wide support for national priorities in the rule of law area, UNIOGBIS, UNDP, UNODC, the United Nations Children's Fund and UN-Women made progress towards the finalization of a joint programme

on police, corrections and justice reform under the umbrella of the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations.

64. On 18 and 19 October, a two-day retreat of the Senior Policy Group of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau brought together senior leaders from UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team to review the Organization's strategies and priorities in the country. The review was undertaken in the light of the political crisis and the pending implementation of the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. The outcomes will be used to ensure that the United Nations system is leveraged to contribute to peacebuilding and stabilization efforts, including supporting the continuity of access to basic services.

B. Public information

65. UNIOGBIS continued to monitor the national and international press and to disseminate information, in English and Portuguese, on the good offices of my Special Representative, the implementation of the Partnership Framework and the mandated activities of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau. This included the dissemination of more than 160 press releases, articles and posts on social media and the website of UNIOGBIS, in addition to the distribution of 2,000 copies of a magazine on the activities of the United Nations system. UNIOGBIS also produced 22 radio programmes broadcast by private radio stations with national coverage and 27 community radio stations throughout the country. In line with mandated activities, programmatic themes included democracy, citizenship, the political participation of young people and women, models of government and political systems, political dialogue, reconciliation, the mediation agreements reached in Bissau and Conakry, the Sustainable Development Goals and violence against women.

66. Between 12 and 14 October, UNIOGBIS organized a media forum attended by 103 media executives and senior journalists to discuss the management of media companies and journalistic ethics and to assist the Ministry of Social Communication in the design of a national media policy. Similarly, UNIOGBIS and the National Council for Social Communication co-organized, on 21 and 22 December, a workshop with 50 journalists, including 10 women, to draft an ethics code for journalists, as provided for in the relevant media legislation.

C. Staff safety and security

67. No major security incidents affecting United Nations personnel were reported, notwithstanding an increase in violent crime, which included cases of assault and armed robbery in Bissau and in the regions of Bafatá and Gabú.

V. Findings and recommendations of the strategic review mission

68. In response to a request by my Special Representative to determine whether UNIOGBIS was fit for purpose, a mission led by the Department of Political Affairs was deployed to Guinea-Bissau from 4 to 14 December to conduct a strategic review of the key priorities of UNIOGBIS, make recommendations on its operational posture and identify possible elements for an exit strategy. The mission was also composed of representatives of the Department of Field Support, the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNDP and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

69. The strategic review mission met the national authorities, including the President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence. Meetings were also held with representatives of political parties and civil society and with international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau. The mission visited the UNIOGBIS regional office in Buba to assess engagement outside Bissau. It also held in-depth consultations with relevant components within UNIOGBIS and with the United Nations country team.

70. The strategic review mission noted that many national and international stakeholders expected the United Nations, jointly with ECOWAS, to increase pressure on the key political actors to ensure the swift implementation of the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. Meetings with the various national stakeholders confirmed the continued relevance of the road map as the most pragmatic way of overcoming the political impasse and taking key reforms forward. The mission noted the potential for relapse into instability and the continued validity of the drivers identified in the strategic assessment mission of November 2014 (see S/2015/37), dispatched pursuant to Security Council resolution 2157 (2014).

71. The strategic review mission found that UNIOGBIS should sequence its engagement and, in the immediate term, focus on the issues spelled out in the ECOWAS road map. As a priority, attention should be given to maximizing its good offices, political facilitation and coordinating the efforts of international partners. In the immediate to short term, independent of whether a consensual Government was formed, the Mission should focus its political efforts on supporting a timely electoral process for legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019. It should further explore ways to support crucial reform projects in the lead-up to the elections, in particular constitutional review and reform, security sector reform and reforms of the Electoral Code and the legislation on political parties.

72. The strategic review mission also underscored the need for UNIOGBIS to support the implementation of reforms to promote the rule of law and human rights. Such support should be geared towards building the foundations of State institutions and democratic governance, given that viable and functioning State institutions are considered to be of paramount importance for the promotion and protection of human rights. A national reconciliation process to address impunity for past human

rights violations and the sustainable enhancement of State capacities must also remain key areas of United Nations support.

73. To achieve progress in meeting these priorities and corresponding benchmarks, the strategic review mission recommended that UNIOGBIS should enhance its operational posture. In particular, it should strengthen its political capacities so as to provide my Special Representative with enhanced analytical and operational support, including in the areas of good offices, mediation and constitutional, electoral and security sector reform. Moreover, the UNIOGBIS human rights and public information units should be fully leveraged in direct support of the political mandate. Strategic sequencing, in particular of programmatic activities that are not sustainable in the current situation, should free up resources to support a stronger presence of UNIOGBIS in the regions, including for enhanced monitoring, early warning, decentralized capacity-building and community outreach.

74. The strategic review mission suggested that UNIOGBIS priorities should further be supported by a streamlined management structure, whereby the political office would be strengthened and report directly to my Special Representative, while the heart of the programmatic work, in particular on the rule of law and security institutions, would be led by a single deputy special representative for rule of law and deputy head of mission, who would also serve as United Nations Resident Coordinator. Such an arrangement would also serve to foster greater integration between UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team and prepare for the eventual exit of UNIOGBIS.

75. The strategic review mission proposed possible benchmarks for the exit of UNIOGBIS. The overarching benchmark for the coming three years should be to accompany the public in reaching agreement on and implementing key reforms towards successful elections and a stabilized post-electoral period. The mission recommended that, if, by the end of the current legislative and presidential terms, no significant progress had been made in achieving key short-term priorities for UNIOGBIS, the Security Council should reconsider options for the future role of UNIOGBIS.

VI. Observations

76. I am deeply concerned by the protracted political crisis in Guinea-Bissau and its negative impact on the country's stability and socioeconomic development. The lack of progress in identifying and implementing a sustainable solution is having a detrimental effect on national efforts to tackle long-standing and emerging challenges to peace, security, development and human rights and to move forward with a viable peacebuilding agenda.

77. Political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau must move away from their intransigent positions that serve only to perpetuate divisions. I urge all political actors to put the interests of the people above all other considerations. I call upon them to engage in genuine dialogue and find common ground to urgently resolve the political crisis.

78. The Government has benefited from the unwavering support and goodwill of its regional and international partners. The six-point road map of 10 September and

the Conakry Agreement of 14 October, brokered by ECOWAS and supported by the United Nations and other international partners, offer a historic opportunity for the national authorities and political leaders, together with civil society, to jointly ensure political stability and build sustainable peace.

79. The United Nations remains determined to support Guinea-Bissau in achieving progress on key reforms, as outlined in the Conakry Agreement, aimed at creating a conducive environment for the holding of legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019, the reform of the Electoral Code and the promulgation of a new law on political parties that would enhance the parties' autonomy and internal democracy. These reforms would be the first step towards the creation of an enabling environment for further national reconciliation.

80. I am encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at its fiftieth ordinary session, on 17 December, to supporting the implementation of the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. I join ECOWAS in urging the President and all the signatories to the agreements to commit themselves to fully implementing them.

81. I commend the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority and President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau and President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, and the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, for their efforts in support of Guinea-Bissau. I take note of the decision of the Authority to withdraw ECOMIB by 30 June 2017. UNIOGBIS will work with all national, regional and international partners to ensure that the withdrawal does not create a vacuum that could lead to instability.

82. I welcome the sustained engagement of all international partners present in the country, in particular the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS and the European Union. I encourage them to continue to support the country's national strategic and operational plan for the period 2015-2020 and to make good on the commitments made during the round-table dialogue held in Brussels in March 2015. I welcome the resumption of the IMF programme of disbursements and encourage international partners to support their development programmes where they remain feasible and sustainable, in particular with a view to supporting the provision of basic public services to the population, creating greater economic opportunities, including for young people, and building the capacity of civil society organizations and local authorities.

83. The challenges posed by transnational organized crime and other emerging threats, including the risk of other complex security challenges in West Africa spilling over, continue to present genuine threats to stability. I call upon national, regional and international partners to coordinate action to prevent and put an end to the corrosive and destabilizing effects of transnational crime.

84. I am encouraged that, throughout the political crisis, the armed forces and security institutions have refrained from interfering in the political arena. The formation of a fully functioning Government that conforms to the letter and spirit of the Conakry Agreement, supported by the National Assembly, is indispensable to making sustainable progress in the modernization of the armed forces and the effective implementation of national security sector reform plans with the support of international partners.

85. I strongly encourage donors to support the joint programme on police, justice and corrections, developed by UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team on the basis of national priority plans. International donors could also leverage the joint programme as a platform for coordinating their assistance.

86. I welcome the progress made towards the establishment of an interministerial committee on human rights to follow up on State obligations resulting from the ratification of human rights instruments. I commend the Ministry of Education on its decision to formally introduce human rights into the curricula, produce a manual for teachers and train teachers on human rights. I also welcome the launch of a human rights guide for the armed forces and encourage the military leaders to fully comply with its principles.

87. Building on this progress, I urge the national authorities to finalize the ratification of pending international human rights instruments and reiterate my calls for the implementation of the recommendations of human rights mechanisms, including those of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in 2015, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights in 2014 and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in 2015.

88. The mandate of UNIOGBIS expires on 28 February 2017. As Guinea-Bissau continues to seek a pathway towards sustainable peace, the urgent need for the United Nations to make a political difference is evident. In this regard, I endorse the recommendations of the strategic review mission outlined above. The United Nations needs the operational flexibility to respond effectively to the challenges of the political stalemate, while also focusing on its primary mandate of preventing conflict and sustaining long-term peace. In this regard, UNIOGBIS will need to strengthen its political capacities and strategically sequence its mandated activities to focus on creating the political space needed for sustainable peacebuilding. A streamlined management structure will also help in enhancing integration within the United Nations system in Guinea-Bissau. Furthermore, I recommend that the mandate of UNIOGBIS be extended for another year, until 28 February 2018.

89. I express my appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team under the leadership of my Special Representative, Modibo Ibrahim Touré, for their commitment, endurance and hard work, as well as to bilateral, regional and international partners for their continuing contributions to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.